



United States Department Of Justice

*United States Attorney's Office
Districts of Guam & the NMI*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, MAY 16, 2011

PRESS RELEASE

ALICIA A.G. LIMTIACO, United States Attorney for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, announced today that a federal jury returned a guilty verdict against defendant Adrian Atalig Mendiola of Rota for unlawfully possessing a threatened species—the Mariana fruit bat or what is locally known as the Fanihi. The jury also found Mr. Mendiola not guilty of receiving or acquiring a threatened species.

The conviction is the result of a December 19, 2008, search of Mr. Mendiola's residence that uncovered four frozen fruit bats in his freezer. Authorities searched his residence after two of the three maternity fruit bat colonies had been unlawfully poached in Rota around November 1, 2008.

“This is a significant verdict and victory for the CNMI,” said U.S. Attorney Alicia A.G. Limtiaco. “It is a step forward in protecting the Fanihi and ensuring that it remains a part of the community and culture for generations to come. This case and verdict serve as a clear reminder that violations of the Endangered Species Act, whether involving fruit bats, turtles, or other wild or marine life, will be prosecuted.”

Defendant Mendiola faces up to six months imprisonment and a \$25,000 fine when he is sentenced on August 16, 2011

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service conducted the investigation with assistance from other federal agency partners, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Marshals Service, the U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife also provided critical assistance during the investigation and prosecution. Assistant United States Attorney Kirk Schuler prosecuted the case.

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